



Teachers union volunteers marching to Sacramento

Group draws support in 2nd week of effort to attract more public attention to plight of schools

Nearly two weeks into a seven-week march from Bakersfield to Sacramento to advocate for reinvestment in public education and other services, an event spokesman said that despite some blisters and sprained ankles, the walk has "been incredible so far."

The walk, "March for California's Future," began in Bakersfield on March 5 and will end in Sacramento on April 21. It is sponsored by the California Federation of Teachers, which has partnered with a diverse group of organizations representing the faith community, public safety sector, health services, and public education.

The seven core marchers, two of whom are from the Bay Area--Jenn Laskin, a Watsonville K-12 teacher, and Anna Graves, a retired Berkeley adult education teacher--have been walking eight to 16 miles per day and staying in campgrounds, churches and RV parks.

The marchers have been joined by thousands of supporters along the way, including some who the marchers were surprised to see.

"There's tremendous energy," said event spokesman Steve Hopcraft.

In a phone interview Tuesday, Laskin said while the group was marching from Shafter to Wasco just outside Bakersfield, they were confronted by a woman who pulled over in her car and stopped the entire procession of marchers.

The woman told the group she was a retired teacher of eight years and, though conservative, said she supported what the marchers were doing.

She said her own services have been deteriorating and her social security has been cut. She then handed the group \$15 and said, "This is what I can give you," according to Laskin.

Laskin said it was the first time the group received any money from a supporter on the march.

"We were really touched," Laskin said.

She said they haven't encountered any opposition yet on the march, though one man complained about traffic problems near the march.

The march started a day after California's "Day of Action," in which demonstrations were held throughout the state in protest of budget cuts to public education.

Laura Dudnick, Bay City News

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